

(05-PE)

Disability Awareness Month

INCREASING AWARENESS THROUGH ATHLETICS AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Athletic participation is an important part of growing up. Children in public schools are required to complete physical education classes, and many children get involved in both school and community-based athletic programs. Because physical education and athletics are such a big part of children's lives, their teammates and coaches can have a significant impact on their beliefs and attitudes – even the attitudes they hold toward people with disabilities. That is why physical education classes, school athletic teams and community-based athletic programs are perfect settings in which to promote disability awareness and inclusion.

Teaching children about disability awareness and inclusion is also a great way to teach the value of good sportsmanship. Many of the concepts are similar: treat others as you wish to be treated, respect the abilities of others and be supportive of others. “Good sports” display these behaviors during athletic competition, and teaching about disability awareness and inclusion can help children carry these concepts over into other parts of their lives.

This packet includes disability awareness activity suggestions that can be implemented in a physical education classroom, school athletic program or community-based athletic organization. The activities are separated into two categories: short activities, which are ideal for classroom settings and after-school programs, and events and long-term programs, which are suited for school and community-based athletic programs or all school convocations.

SHORT ACTIVITIES

The following activities can be completed in an hour or less, so they are ideal for classroom settings or after-school activity groups. These activities can also be incorporated into more extensive disability awareness events. Be sure to notify local media outlets of upcoming activities, as they may be interested in sending a photographer and/or reporter. (See the sample media advisory and calendar release at the end of this packet.) Also be sure to send follow-up thank-you notes to reporters who cover your event and any speakers, vendors or other people or organizations that assist with these activities. Sample thank-you notes are included with this packet.

Adaptive equipment expo

Work with a local disability organization, rehabilitation hospital or athletic equipment retailer to display adaptive equipment used by athletes with disabilities. Some examples include hand-operated bicycles (called hand cycles), tandem bicycles, racing wheelchairs, beep balls, and mono skis. You, a representative from one of these organizations, or a local athlete with a disability should explain how, why and when the equipment is used and answer any questions. Remind the children that athletes with disabilities can be competitive if given the opportunity; there is even a competition just like the Olympics, called the Paralympics, designed especially for athletes with disabilities.

Adaptive exercise

Children might wonder how people with disabilities stay in shape. After all, a person who uses a wheelchair can't go jogging, right? Can he or she go swimming? Lift weights? Help children to better understand the capabilities of people with disabilities by guiding them through some exercises people who use wheelchairs do to stay healthy. Following are several examples:

- Stretches – Ask children to sit on the floor. Then lead them through traditional upper-body stretches and other warm-up activities that can be accomplished while sitting.
- “Sitting push-ups” – For this activity, children should sit in sturdy chairs with armrests. After stretching, children should grip the armrests and use their arms to lift their bodies up off of the chair. This is one way people who use wheelchairs build upper-body strength.

- Strength training – Stretching rubber tubing with the arms is one way people with disabilities can build upper-body strength while sitting. Strength training also benefits people whose disabilities, such as multiple sclerosis, cause muscles to weaken over time.

There are a number of exercise videos/DVDs available for people with disabilities. Consider renting or purchasing one of these videos and asking the children to follow along. Or, ask a local physical therapist to guide children through exercises used by clients with disabilities.

Speaker/demonstration

Identify a local athlete with a disability who would be willing to speak to the children about his or her athletic experiences, as well as disability issues in general. If the athlete uses any adaptive equipment in his or her physical activity, ask for a brief demonstration. Also ask the speaker to discuss the many opportunities available to athletes with disabilities, such as the Paralympic Games and Special Olympics. Be sure to allow time for the children to ask questions of the speaker.

As an alternative, invite a team of athletes with disabilities to give a demonstration of their sport and answer questions from the children. Examples could include a wheelchair basketball, power soccer or beep baseball team. Again, allow time for the athletes to discuss athletic opportunities for people with disabilities and answer questions.

For information on local area teams or individual athletes with disabilities contact your local area rehabilitation hospital, independent living center, rehabilitation service provider, or an organization from the enclosed resource list. Many of the national organizations on the list may be able to refer you to a local affiliate.

EVENTS AND LONG-TERM ACTIVITIES

The suggestions included in this section are for annual events and long-term programs. While these activities could be implemented in a physical education classroom, they are ideally suited for community-based athletic programs and centers, such as a local YMCA or Boys or Girls Club. As with the shorter activities, be sure to notify media of upcoming events and send thank-you notes when appropriate.

Inclusive sports league

In some communities, children with disabilities participate in Special Olympics programs, while children without disabilities participate in other community-based athletic programs. While this arrangement provides children both with and without disabilities with opportunities for athletic competition, it does not always promote the concept of inclusion for people with disabilities.

Work with local parents, coaches, schools, places of worship and community organizations to establish an inclusive sports league for children both with and without disabilities. Any sport can be included in the league, from swimming to basketball to baseball; incorporating several different sports will provide the widest opportunity for participation. As children with and without disabilities participate on the same teams, they will learn to work together and recognize everyone's unique abilities and talents.

Be sure to create opportunities for different teams to interact and for the community to get involved in the league. For example, you might hold an annual awards dinner to recognize outstanding athletes, coaches and community supporters. Or, you could arrange for league-wide practice sessions, field trips or other activities to bring even more people with and without disabilities together. Enlisting team members' support to hold a league fund-raiser, such as a community carnival, would be another way to encourage children with and without disabilities to work together.

Community awareness day

Create an athletics-focused disability awareness day, to take place during Disability Awareness Month in March. Activities could include those listed in the "short activities" section of this packet, as well as inclusive, one-day tournaments; demonstrations or speeches by athletes with disabilities; displays of athletic equipment used by people with disabilities; trivia stations about famous/successful athletes with disabilities; and much more. Promote the event through local media outlets and consider offering prizes to winners of tournaments and other activities. This would also be a great opportunity to promote a new inclusive sports league in your community and encourage children to sign up.

Volunteerism as advocacy

One of the best ways to promote positive attitudes about disability is to encourage children without disabilities to get to know children with disabilities, especially if they can work together to accomplish a common goal. For example, members of a community sports league or school athletic team could:

- Form a “buddy” program with children with disabilities, focusing on social activities such as going to the movies, attending an athletic event or eating out at a restaurant.
- Work alongside children with disabilities on a community service project, such as beautifying a city park or gathering donations for a local shelter.
- Develop a carnival or other fun event that would include children both with and without disabilities. Children should be directed to consider accessibility issues for children with many types of disabilities.

Physical activity is an important part of a healthy childhood. Because nearly every child is involved in physical education classes or school and community-based athletic programs, these activities provide an ideal environment in which to teach the important messages of disability awareness and inclusion while also emphasizing the value of good sportsmanship.

(Sample Calendar Release)

Calendar Release

For Immediate Release
(Date)

Contact:
(Your Name)
(Your phone)

The Anytown Boys & Girls Club is hosting “Disability Awareness Day” from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday, March 1, at 100 N. Main St. The event will include activities for children and several exhibits and demonstrations. For more information, contact Joe Smith at 123-4567.

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(Sample Media Advisory)

For Immediate Release
(Date)

Contact:
(Your Name)
(Your phone)

MEDIA ADVISORY

What Disability Awareness Day

Activities will include an inclusive softball tournament, demonstrations by athletes with disabilities and much more.

When Monday, March 1
10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Where Anytown Boys & Girls Club
100 N. Main St.

Who Former Paralympic athlete John Doe is scheduled to demonstrate wheelchair basketball techniques, and Mayor Jane Smith will be on hand to honor the Anytown Inclusive Sports League's outstanding coach of the year. Others invited to participate include (list "celebrities" here).

Note The event is free of charge and open to the public. For more information call (123-4567).

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(Sample Thank-You Letter)

(Date)

(Mr. Jim Johnson)
(Title)
(XYZ Company/Organization)
(123 Main Street)
(Anytown, Indiana 46000)

Dear (Mr. Johnson):

Thank you for participating in our Disability Awareness Day activities. Your involvement helped make the event a tremendous success. More than (1,000) people attended and gained a better understanding of disability issues.

We hope you personally learned something about people with disabilities through demonstrations and other activities. Increasing the awareness and understanding of people with disabilities in our community is our goal. We appreciate your help in working toward that goal.

Thanks again, and we hope the day was enjoyable for you.

Sincerely,

(Your Name)
(Title)

(Sample Media Thank You Letter – With Suggestions for Appropriate Language and attached
Guidelines for Reporting and Writing about People with Disabilities)

(Date)

(Mr. John Doe)

(Title)

(XYZ Media)

(123 Main Street)

(Anytown, Indiana 46000)

Dear (Mr. Doe):

Thank you for your recent article/broadcast about our organization/event. Although we always appreciate coverage about people with disabilities and the issues that concern them, it is also important to realize that the way a reporter tells a story can make a significant difference in how people with disabilities are perceived in the community.

Reporting on the disability community is just like reporting on any other minority group; there are “correct” words and phrases to use. The Indiana Governor’s Council for People with Disabilities and other disability organizations emphasize “people first” language that focuses on the person first, with the disability as secondary. For example, *woman who is deaf* is preferred over *deaf woman*. In addition, *people with disabilities* is preferred over *the handicapped* or *the disabled*.

I have enclosed “Guidelines for Reporting and Writing about People with Disabilities.” The guidelines explain preferred terminology when reporting about people with disabilities and reflect the input of more than 100 national disability organizations.

If you ever have a question these guidelines don’t address, please feel free to contact me. Again, we appreciate your coverage of our organization and people with disabilities in general.

Sincerely,

(Your Name)

(Title)

Enclosure

Guidelines for Reporting and Writing About People with Disabilities

When writing, it's important to be concise, particularly in journalism. However, sometimes the effort to limit wordiness leads to inappropriate references to people with disabilities. The following guidelines explain preferred terminology and reflect input from more than 100 national disability organizations. These guidelines have been reviewed and endorsed by media and disability experts throughout the country. Although opinions may differ on some terms, the guidelines represent the current consensus among disability organizations. Portions of the guidelines have been adopted into the "Associated Press Stylebook," a basic reference for professional journalists.

DO NOT FOCUS ON DISABILITY unless it is crucial to a story. Avoid tear-jerking human interest stories about incurable diseases, congenital impairments or severe injury. Focus instead on issues that affect the quality of life for those individuals, such as accessible transportation, housing, affordable health care, employment opportunities and discrimination.

PUT PEOPLE FIRST, not their disability. Say "woman with arthritis," "children who are deaf" or "people with disabilities." This puts the focus on the individual, not the particular functional limitation. Despite editorial pressures to be succinct, it is never acceptable to use "crippled," "deformed," "suffers from," "victim of," "the retarded," "the deaf and dumb," etc.

DO NOT SENSATIONALIZE A DISABILITY by writing "afflicted with," "crippled with," "suffers from," "victim of" and so on. Instead, write "person who has multiple sclerosis" or "man who had polio."

DO NOT USE GENERIC LABELS for disability groups, such as "the retarded" or "the deaf." Emphasize people, not labels. Say "people with mental retardation" or "people who are deaf."

EMPHASIZE ABILITIES, not limitations. For example:

- Correct: "uses a wheelchair/braces" or "walks with crutches"
- Incorrect: "confined to a wheelchair," "wheelchair-bound" or "crippled"

Similarly, do not use emotional descriptors such as "unfortunate," "pitiful" and similar phrases.

Disability groups also strongly object to using euphemisms to describe disabilities. Terms such as "handi-capable," "mentally different," "physically inconvenienced" and "physically challenged" are considered condescending. They reinforce the idea that disabilities cannot be dealt with directly and candidly.

SHOW PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES AS ACTIVE participants in society. Portraying persons with disabilities interacting with people without disabilities in social and work environments helps break down barriers and open lines of communications.

DO NOT PORTRAY SUCCESSFUL PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES AS SUPERHUMAN.

Many people with disabilities do not want to be “hero-ized.” Like many people without disabilities, they wish to be fully included in our communities and do not want to be judged based on unreasonable expectations.

DO NOT IMPLY DISEASE when discussing disabilities that result from a prior disease episode. People who had polio and experienced after-effects have a post-polio disability. They are not currently experiencing the disease. Do not imply disease with people whose disability has resulted from anatomical or physiological damage (e.g., person with spina bifida or cerebral palsy). Reference to the disease associated with a disability is acceptable only with chronic diseases, such as arthritis, Parkinson’s disease or multiple sclerosis. People with disabilities should never be referred to as “patients” or “cases” unless their relationship with their doctor is under discussion.

LISTED BELOW ARE PREFERRED WORDS THAT REFLECT A POSITIVE ATTITUDE IN PORTRAYING DISABILITIES:

- *Brain injury.* Describes a condition where there is long-term or temporary disruption in brain function resulting from injury to the brain. Difficulties with cognitive, physical, emotional or social functioning may occur. Use “person with a brain injury,” “woman who has sustained brain injury” or “boy with an acquired brain injury.”
- *Cleft lip.* Describes a specific congenital disability involving lip and gum. The term “hare lip” is anatomically incorrect and stigmatizing. Use “person who has a cleft lip” or “a cleft palate.”
- *Deaf.* Deafness refers to a profound degree of hearing loss that prevents understanding speech through the ear. “Hearing impaired” and “hearing loss” are generic terms used by some individuals to indicate any degree of hearing loss – from mild to profound. These terms include people who are hard of hearing and deaf. However, some individuals completely disfavor the term “hearing impaired.” Others prefer to use “deaf” or “hard of hearing.” “Hard of hearing” refers to a mild to moderate hearing loss that may or may not be corrected with amplification. Use “woman who is deaf,” “boy who is hard of hearing,” “individuals with hearing losses” and “people who are deaf or hard of hearing.”
- *Disability.* General term used for a functional limitation that interferes with a person’s ability to, for example, walk, lift, hear or learn. It may refer to a physical, sensory or mental condition. Use as a descriptive noun or adjective, such as “person living with AIDS,” “woman who is blind” or “man with a disability.” “Impairment” refers to loss or abnormality of an organ or body mechanism, which may result in a disability.
- *Disfigurement.* Refers to physical changes caused by burn, trauma, disease or congenital problems.

- *Down syndrome*. Describes a chromosome disorder that usually causes a delay in physical, intellectual and language development. Usually results in mental retardation. “Mongol” or “mongoloid” are unacceptable.
- *Handicap*. Not a synonym for disability. Describes a condition or barrier imposed by society, the environment or by one’s self. Some individuals prefer “inaccessible” or “not accessible” to describe social and environmental barriers. “Handicap” can be used when citing laws and situations, but should not be used to describe a disability. Do not refer to people with disabilities as “the handicapped” or “handicapped people.” Say “the building is not accessible for a wheelchair-user.” “The stairs are a handicap for her.”
- *HIV/AIDS*. Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome is an infectious disease resulting in the loss of the body’s immune system to ward off infections. The disease is caused by the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). A positive test for HIV can occur without symptoms of the illnesses, which usually develop up to 10 years later, including tuberculosis, recurring pneumonia, cancer, recurrent vaginal yeast infections, intestinal ailments, chronic weakness and fever and profound weight loss. Preferred: “people living with HIV,” “people with AIDS” or “living with AIDS.”
- *Mental disability*. The Federal Rehabilitation Act (Section 504) lists four categories under mental disability: “psychiatric disability,” “retardation,” “learning disability” or “cognitive impairment” are acceptable.
- *Nondisabled*. Appropriate term for people without disabilities. “Normal,” “able-bodied,” “healthy” or “whole” are inappropriate.
- *Seizure*. Describes an involuntary muscular contraction, a brief impairment or loss of consciousness, etc., resulting from a neurological condition such as epilepsy or from an acquired brain injury. Rather than “epileptic,” say “girl with epilepsy” or “boy with a seizure disorder.” The term “convulsion” should be used only for seizures involving contraction of the entire body.
- *Spastic*. Describes a muscle with sudden abnormal and involuntary spasm. Not appropriate for describing someone with cerebral palsy or a neurological disorder. Muscles, not people, are spastic.
- *Stroke*. Caused by interruption of blood to brain. Hemiplegia (paralysis on one side) may result. “Stroke survivor” is preferred over “stroke victim.”

The Indiana Governor’s Council for People with Disabilities would like to acknowledge the Research and Training Center on Independent Living at the University of Kansas for the usage rights of the “Guidelines.”

Resource List

INDIANA

National Center on Accessibility

501 N. Morton St.
Bloomington, IN 47408-2698
(812) 856-4422
nca@indiana.edu
www.ncaonline.org

Power Soccer Clinics and Demonstrations

Karen Russo
(317) 706-8977
power-soccer@indy.rr.com

Special Olympics Indiana

6100 West 96th Street, Suite 270
Indianapolis, IN 46278
(317) 328-2000
(800) 742-0612
information@soindiana.org
www.specialolympicsindiana.org

**For other local contacts, call a
rehabilitation hospital or independent
living center.**

NATIONAL

America's Athletes with Disabilities

8630 Fenton St., Suite 920
Silver Spring, MD 20910
(301) 589-9042
info@americasathletes.org
www.americasathletes.org

International Paralympic Committee

Adenauerallee 212-214
53113 Bonn, Germany
(49) 228-2097-200
(49) 228-2097-209 (fax)
info@paralympic.org
www.paralympic.org

National Beep Baseball Association

secretary@nbba.org
www.nbba.org

National Disability Sports Association

25 W. Independence Way
Kingston, RI 02882
(401) 792-7130
info@ndsaonline.org
www.ndsaonline.org

National Sports Center for the Disabled

P.O. Box 1290
Winter Park, CO 80482
(970) 726-1540
info@nscd.org
www.nscd.org

National Wheelchair Basketball Association

6165 Lehman Drive, Suite 101
Colorado Springs, CO 80918
(719) 266-4082
toddhatfield@nwba.org
www.nwba.org

Special Olympics

1133 19th Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20036 USA
(800) 700-8585
info@specialolympics.org
www.specialolympics.org

U.S. Electric Wheelchair Hockey Association

7216 39th Ave. N.
Minneapolis, MN 55427
(763) 535-4736
info@powerhockey.com
www.powerhockey.com

U.S. Paralympic Committee

One Olympic Plaza
Colorado Springs, CO 80909
(719) 866-2030
paralympicinfo@usoc.org
www.usparalympics.org